

We hope that the Croatian Serbs will accept this new mandate and that the continued presence of UN troops will be able to prevent a resurgence of hostilities.

We are consulting with the UN and our allies in New York in order to ensure that the new mandate in Croatia is workable and efficient, despite a reduction in the number of troops.

Even if the conflict in Croatia is not rekindled, the conflict could easily resume in Bosnia, where the current ceasefire expires on May 1. We already have indications that all parties in Bosnia are using the ceasefire to prepare for a renewal of hostilities.

The UN, the contact group and the ICFY [International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia] are trying to prevent a renewal of hostilities and to find a comprehensive solution to the conflict in the former Yugoslavia.

The contact group has proposed a plan to Serbian President Milosovic, under which he would receive a reduction in sanctions on the condition that his government recognize the republics of the former Yugoslavia.

My French counterpart, Alain Juppé, has invited Presidents Izetbegovic, Tudjman and Milosovic to a summit with President Mitterrand in hopes of accelerating the peace process. Should the summit be successful, an international conference will follow to build on this development.

The draft bill presented to the American Congress on the unilateral lifting of the arms embargo against the Government of Bosnia remains a concern for this government. In fact, if Congress adopts the Bill this spring and the administration does not veto it, it would result in an escalation of the conflict, and end to the UN's humanitarian mission and the withdrawal of a great number of peacekeeping forces including those of Canada and our key allies.

The military planning for an eventual withdrawal of these peacekeepers is ongoing at the UN and NATO. It is possible that our troops will have to withdraw under difficult conditions, particularly if their departure is due to a resumption of the hostilities.

In this context, Cabinet will discuss later this month the future of Canada's contribution to peacekeeping in the former Yugoslavia. Our options will depend on the evolution of the political and military situation in the field.

Meanwhile, we will liaise closely with the UN, the contact group, our allies and major contributors of peacekeeping troops.